United Nations A/AC.183/SR.252

General Assembly

Distr.: General
11 October 2000

Original: English

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 252nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 21 July 2000, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Ka ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Report by the Chairman on his attendance of the meetings and conferences of intergovernmental organizations (April-July 2000)

2. **The Chairman** described his participation in the XIII Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Cartagena, Colombia on 8 and 9 April 2000, at which a number of delegations had raised the question of Palestine, deplored the obstacles to the peace process and called for the renewal of negotiations to ensure Israel's compliance with the commitments it had undertaken. The Final Document of the Ministerial Conference reaffirmed the Non-Aligned Movement's support for the Palestinian people in its efforts to regain its legitimate rights and demanded that Israel should evacuate the Occupied Palestinian Territory and honour its commitments.

3. He had also participated in the Group of 77 South Summit, held in Havana, which had determined that peace and an end to Israeli occupation were prerequisites for the development of the Middle East, that a final settlement must be achieved by the deadline of 13 September 2000 and that Palestine should be declared a State with Jerusalem as its capital. Following a statement by Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Council of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Kadoumi, representing Palestine, had briefed a number of delegations on the situation on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

4. He had also participated in the work of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, held in Malaysia from 27 to 30 June 2000, and in a preliminary high-level meeting for the preparation of draft resolutions and documents. The Council of Ministers had addressed the question of Palestine, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the status of Jerusalem and the peace process. They had adopted draft resolutions by consensus on all those issues, reaffirming the unwavering support of all States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference for the cause of the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. The Conference had requested the international community to provide the Palestinian people with substantial economic and financial assistance during the critical transitional phase. In a very well-received statement, Mr. Kadoumi, had recapitulated the phases of the peace process, the obstacles encountered and the outlook for the future. In the final communiqué, covering the question of Jerusalem, Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Council of Ministers had requested the international community to support Palestinian membership in the United Nations and full participation in the Millennium Summit to be held at Headquarters from 6 to 8 September 2000.

5. Lastly, he had participated in the preparatory work of the Council of Ministers and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held in Lomé from 4 to 12 July 2000, and in the work of their Drafting Committee. The question of the Middle East and the question of Palestine had been included as two separate agenda items but had been addressed jointly in the general debate. Mr. Kadoumi, representing Palestine, had reported on the latest developments in the peace process, including the efforts undertaken and the obstacles encountered since the meeting held in Sharm el-Sheikh with a view to reviving the peace process. Concerning the question of Palestine, the Council of Ministers had expressed its concern at the slow pace of implementation of the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum for the conclusion of a framework agreement but nonetheless congratulated the leadership of the PLO, particularly Chairman Arafat, on its patience, wisdom and commitment to the pursuit of peace. The Council of Ministers had also stressed the need to reach a final settlement by the 13 September deadline.

6. Under the item relating to the question of the Middle East, the Council of Ministers had stressed that the question of Palestine was central to the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, recalling United Nations resolutions on the Middle East, particularly those of the Security Council. It had called for the implementation of the commitments undertaken within the framework of the Madrid Peace Conference and had demanded the withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian territories, the Golan and southern Lebanon. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Council of the PLO and President of the Palestinian Authority, had made a highly acclaimed statement at the Lomé Summit before departing for

Camp David, where peace negotiations were currently under way.

7. He took it that the Committee wished to take note of the report by the Chairman.

8. *It was so decided.*

Report by the Vice-Chairman on the International Conference on Palestine Refugees, held at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, on 26 and 27 April, and the United Nations NGO Meeting on Palestine Refugees, held on 28 April 2000

9. **Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla** (Cuba), Vice-Chairman, said that the objective of the International Conference on Palestine Refugees, held at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization had been to provide information on the current situation of Palestine refugees and consider the role which the United Nations could play in seeking a just solution to the refugee issue. The plight of the Palestine refugees had been analysed in depth within the context of the current Middle East peace process. Another objective of the International Conference had been to promote concerted political and other action in support of a lasting solution to the Palestine refugee problem, as a prerequisite for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority, Sir Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Laraki, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and Mr. Kamal, Under-Secretary-General of the League of Arab States had made statements during the opening session, which had been followed by three plenary sessions on Palestine refugees — the longest-running humanitarian problem in the contemporary world — the relationship between the United Nations and Palestine refugees and issues related to the Palestine refugees and the current Middle East peace process. A number of internationally renowned experts had made presentations in the plenary sessions, including Mr. El-Baz, Political Adviser to the President of Egypt, Mr. Rahman, head of the PLO Refugees Department, Mr. Katz, a Labour Party representative in the Israeli Knesset, Mr. Robertson, Canada's Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, and Mr. Siegman of the United States council on Foreign Relations.

10. Participants in the Conference had included 58 Governments, 4 United Nations agencies and bodies, 3 intergovernmental organizations and representatives of 38 non-governmental organizations. A total of 16 experts, both Palestinian and Israeli, had made statements, and each plenary session had included an open discussion, to which the representatives of Oman, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, South Africa, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, France, Indonesia, China, Ukraine, Italy and Egypt had contributed. The Committee had been represented at the Conference by a delegation composed of Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman, Mr. Balzan (Malta), Rapporteur, Mr. Zackheos (Cyprus), Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) and himself, in his capacity as Vice-Chairman and head of the delegation.

11. At the closing session of the Conference, he had presented the concluding remarks of the organizers of the Conference, which highlighted the bleak situation of the Palestine refugees, called for urgent intervention by the international community and stressed the importance, within the context of the current permanent-status negotiations, of a just solution to the question of the Palestine refugees as a prerequisite for both a just solution of the question of Palestine and a lasting peace in the Middle East. The organizers had also commended the work of the Refugee Working Group and confirmed that multilateral negotiations were an essential part of the peace process. In the organizers' view, the Conference had demonstrated strong international support for a solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees in accordance with a number of key United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and Security Council resolution 242 (1967). They had also reaffirmed the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with regard to all aspects of the question of Palestine, including the plight of the Palestine refugees, and the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their land and recover their property and to receive appropriate compensation. They praised the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and urged all Governments to contribute the necessary funds to enable it to maintain its services to Palestine refugees. He wished to express the Committee's gratitude to the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States and its desire to continue cooperating with them.

12. Participants in the United Nations NGO Meeting on Palestine Refugees, held under the Committee's auspices, had included representatives of 66 non-governmental organizations and a number of observers for Governments and intergovernmental organizations. The Meeting had highlighted the vital role played by organizations of civil society in relief operations, advocacy and awareness-building. Committee members had received a copy of the statement issued by the non-governmental organizations at the conclusion of the Meeting, summarizing their discussion and proposals.

13. In keeping with standard practice, the reports of the two events would be issued as a document of the Division for Palestinian Rights and summarized in the reports to be submitted to the Millennium Assembly. The final documents of both the Conference and the Meeting could be accessed on the Division's Web site at UNISPAL.

14. **The Chairman** said that he took it that the Committee wished to take note of the report by the Vice-Chairman.

15. *It was so decided.*

Report by the Chairman on the United Nations International Meeting in Support of a Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Establishment of Peace in the Middle East, held in Athens on 23 and 24 May 2000, and the United Nations Seminar on Prospects for Palestinian Economic Development and the Middle East Peace Process, held in Cairo on 20 and 21 June 2000.

16. **The Chairman**, reporting on the two events organized under the Committee's auspices, said that the aim of the Athens meeting had been to review the progress achieved within the context of the peace process and to promote intensified political and other action by Governments, intergovernmental organizations and organizations of civil society for the attainment of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and in support of the peace efforts.

17. Mr. Papandreou, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, Mr. Peter Hansen, Commissioner-General of UNRWA, speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Mr. Emil Jarjoui, a member of the Executive Committee of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and himself, speaking on behalf of the Committee, had delivered statements during the opening session. Participants in the International Meeting had included representatives of 43 Governments, a representative of Palestine, 3 intergovernmental organizations, 2 United Nations agencies and 35 non-governmental organizations. Fifteen experts, both Palestinian and Israeli, had made statements during the plenary session.

18. In their final statement, participants in the seminar had called for the parties to do their utmost to preserve and solidify the accomplishments of the peace process and make every effort to reach a final settlement by September 2000. The participants had stressed that agreement on permanent-status issues (Palestine refugees, the Status of Jerusalem, settlements, borders and the sharing of water resources) should be based on the norms of international law and international legitimacy and had reaffirmed that the Middle East peace process was based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the principle of "land for peace". The final statement also stressed the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with respect to all aspects of the question of Palestine until a satisfactory settlement based on United Nations resolutions and international legitimacy was reached and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people were realized. He wished to thank the Government of Greece for organizing the International Meeting and expressed the hope that such cooperation would continue.

19. Introducing the report of the United Nations Seminar on Prospects for Palestinian Economic Development and the Middle East Peace Process, held at Cairo on 20 and 21 June 2000 (A/55/144-E/2000/87), he said that the importance of international assistance in meeting the urgent economic and social needs of the Palestinian people could not be underestimated. The Seminar, in which Palestinian, Israeli and international experts had taken part, had begun with an assessment of economic performance and progress made in Palestinian institution-building during the interim period. There had been a panel discussion on Israeli-Palestinian economic relations and their impact on peace-building in the region, while another panel had focused on the impact of non-economic issues, including Israeli settlements, the question of Jerusalem, Palestine refugees and access to natural resources, especially water, on the economic and social development of the Palestinian people.

20. Representatives of 82 Governments, 5 intergovernmental organizations, 17 United Nations

agencies and programmes and 32 non-governmental organizations had attended the Seminar, and presentations had been made by 19 experts. The Committee had been represented at the Seminar by a six-person delegation, which he had led. In his address to the Seminar, he had informed the participants of the international efforts to promote the Palestinian Authority's Bethlehem 2000 project.

21. He expressed gratitude to the Government of Egypt for hosting the Seminar, which had contributed to raising awareness in the international community that efforts to achieve a political settlement would succeed only if they were accompanied by policies designed to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian people and to promote regional economic cooperation and development.

22. In accordance with established practice, the reports on the two events would be issued as publications of the Division for Palestinian Rights. The report on the Cairo Seminar would also be distributed as a document of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. The Final Statement of the Athens Meeting and the report on the Cairo Seminar had been posted on the two Web sites maintained by the Division.

23. He said that he took it that the Committee wished to take note of the reports on the two events.

24. *It was so decided.*

Developments in the Middle East peace process and the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem

25. **Mr. Al-Kidwa** (Observer for Palestine) said that the Palestine Central Council, which had met on 2 and 3 July 2000 in Gaza, had affirmed its determination to give effect to the 1988 Declaration of Independence with the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital, and the attainment of sovereignty on Palestinian land within the 4 June 1967 borders upon the conclusion of the interim period on 13 September 2000. The basis for such a step was the natural and historical right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State, as affirmed in General Assembly resolution 181 (II) and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

26. He recalled that the five-year interim period was to have ended in May 1999, in accordance with the relevant Israeli-Palestinian agreements. However, the two sides had agreed to a one-year extension, setting a new deadline of 13 September 2000 for the reaching of a final settlement. With that deadline approaching, the Council had been compelled to reiterate its determination to assert the rights of the Palestinian people.

27. On 5 July 2000, the President of the United States had called for the convening of a trilateral summit in Camp David, Maryland. Both the President of the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Prime Minister had accepted the invitation. The summit, which had been preceded by meetings between the two sides in Washington at a lower level, had begun on 11 July 2000. Upon the departure of the United States President for the G-8 summit in Okinawa, Japan, on 19 July 2000, the two sides had agreed to remain in Camp David to continue their negotiations. The summit, however, had been on the verge of collapse because of Israel's insistence on positions inconsistent with the relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which required Israel to withdraw from all Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, which, as the Palestinian side had stated repeatedly, must be the capital of an independent Palestinian State.

28. The Palestinian side remained committed to achieving a successful outcome to the summit, which would open the door to a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East and a new era for the region.

29. Irrespective of the outcome of the summit, the Palestinian Authority would seek full membership for Palestine in the United Nations. He trusted that the international community and, in particular, the Committee would support his delegation in that undertaking. He emphasized that the United Nations had a continuing responsibility towards the Palestinian people, who would require the assistance of the international community even after the conclusion and successful implementation of a final settlement agreement.

Other matters

30. **Mr. Cao Qing** (China), referring to an envelope containing official documents sent to the Permanent Mission of China to the United Nations by the Secretariat, said that a serious error had been made in addressing the envelope. He wished to express his profound dissatisfaction that a mistake of such gravity

could have occurred in the Secretariat. He trusted that the Secretariat would speedily rectify the error and ensure that it did not reoccur. It was to be hoped that the matter would be handled with due seriousness.

31. **The Chairman** said that he would ask the Secretariat to correct the error and to see to it that it was not repeated.

32. **Mr. Cao Qing** (China) said that he would have appreciated a response from the Secretariat.

33. **The Chairman** said that the Secretariat would require time to discover the source of the error. The representative of China would receive clarification in due course.

34. **Mr. Al-Kidwa** (Observer for Palestine) expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Division for Palestinian Rights to update the Committee's documentation, which was a task of both historical and practical significance. He proposed that the Division should report to the Committee on the work completed thus far.

35. **The Chairman** said that the Bureau would discuss with the Division the best means of implementing that proposal.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.